

VILLAGERS LEARN THEIR LAND RIGHTS THROUGH PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

While the USAID-supported *Land Titling Initiative Project* (ULTI) is about giving villagers title to land, the process is not simply about doing a quick bureaucratic shuffle and filling out a certificate. Public education and outreach are just as important to ensure that people know their options and their rights. TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and the Internet – all the media outlets available today are used to provide villagers and officials with legal knowledge, draw attention to problematic land relations issues and promote their resolution, encourage citizens to actively protect their rights, and provide for civil society development in Ukraine.

“ULTI’s *Agronovny* program is on the air. Greetings, my name is Olena Kochubynska!” Millions of villagers all over Ukraine have heard these words for several years, spoken each day at 5:45 and 21:00. “They recognize me by my voice”, explains Mrs.

Kochubynska, the project’s public education and outreach manager. “Today it is difficult to remember situation when I started to work. We had to do everything from scratch: at that time not only villagers, but most officials had a vague understanding of Ukrainian land reform mechanisms and the obstacles they would have to deal with. People were not ready for it; they did not know the laws and often gave their own interpretations.”

Aside from *Agronovny*, which has become the calling card for ULTI’s public education campaign, the weekly TV program *Silskiy Chas*, which airs every Sunday on the *First National Channel*, has been another reliable partner for some time now. ULTI program staff and ULTI public education specialists prepare programs on current activities and present typical problems connected with the establishment of new land relations. *Silskiy Chas* has now launched a new

45-minute educational program, which airs on every last Sunday of the month. This program, in cooperation with oblast state administration officials, aims to expose and solve the most typical land disputes that have arisen in this or that oblast. Top oblast and local officials, farmers, villagers, lawyers and independent experts take part in the program, and provide professional analysis and advice.

ULTI’s printed materials also have become quite popular. The project’s publication, *Land Privatization: Law, Practice, Problems*, has found its way to the Cabinet of Ministers, the President’s Secretariat and the Verkhovna Rada. Every Ukrainian village receives at least 20 copies of ULTI’s other publication, *Land Issues: Legal Advice to the Villager*, which is dedicated to land relations.

USAID’s land titling program has also moved onto the information super highway. ULTI’s official website has

proved to be an invaluable source of information for Internet users, especially lawyers, government officials at different levels, the press, and not least of all, the farmers.

Through its public education and outreach efforts, ULTI has established an effective nationwide network for rural legal education. The results can be illustrated via a true incident, in which a farmer visited ULTI’s main office in Kyiv to obtain some help. In general, the office in Kyiv does not provide direct advice – this duty is reserved to the ULTI Legal Aid Centers, located in all oblast capitals. However, it turned out that the visitor was not actually looking for legal counseling for he knew the situation well and even cited the respective legislation. He simply needed help in filling out some documents. When asked where he had developed such knowledge of the law, he answered: “I listen to *Agronovny* every day.”

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DEVELOPING BETTER INSIGHT INTO LEGAL ISSUES

UREP, continued from p. 4

In 10 press club meetings held in Donetsk, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odesa and other Ukrainian cities over the past couple of years, local journalists learned about the peculiarities and novelties in laws on mortgage, bankruptcy, leasing, credit bureaus, judicial enforcement and business registration. A key feature of the meetings with press clubs is the opportunity to engage in question and answer sessions with CLC’s legal advisers. The format provides journalists the opportunity to ask as many questions on legal topics as they like. Frequently,

the dialog finds its way to the general public through newspapers and journals, TV and radio programs. The most recent press club meeting was held in Vynnytsya, in March 2006, during which the CLC discussed the creation of the national electronic registries for judicial decisions and a commercial registry.

To date, more than 300 journalists from throughout Ukraine have developed a better insight into and understanding of legal issues and current events in the legislative process as a result of the collaboration between the CLC and CURE.

NGO Newspaper Safeguards Community Rights

VGORU, continued from p. 1

resolve problems, and they did not expose corruption. Journalists did not demonstrate how people can oppose this corruption or human rights violations, or how they can influence government. More than that – the Oblast’s journalists did not have any idea what the “third sector” (NGO) was, or how it worked,” explained *Vgoru*’s Editor-in-Chief Alla Tiutiunyyk.

An approach and principles that were radically different from those shared by other local press guided *Vgoru*. For NGOs, the paper became an opportunity to show what people can do once they are united, and how problems can be resolved by legal means. The road to becoming independent and self-sustaining was not easy. But thanks to the Charles Mott Foundation, which supported the newspaper from the beginning and UCAN/USAID which provided support in 2003 and 2004, *Vgoru* obtained the ability to rise to its feet and move toward financial independence. The newspaper increased its circulation, created new sections, and began to concentrate more on long and costly investigative reports by its journalists. It also improved its focus on advocacy, became more business efficient, and started its own advertising and distribution departments. The paper owes much of the trust it has developed and earned among its readership to the high standards it maintains; and it is confidence and respect that it cherishes most.

Since *Vgoru* is trusted like no other regional paper, people come to its offices looking for personal help and advice as well. They also write a lot of letters. For instance, six officers from local police precincts recently told the paper about abuse in the region’s police force, including among senior officers who forced subordinates to plant drugs or weapons on people to move investigations along and improve prosecution success rates. Lately doctors, prosecutors and business people who no longer want to give or take bribes and are committed to building a rule-of-law have increasingly besieged the newspaper with their views.

On October 2, 2006, *Vgoru* will be celebrating its fifth anniversary. A small coalition organized five years ago to fight corruption, do investigative journalism and mount advocacy campaigns today has nine member NGOs. It also has a newspaper that seeks to resolve specific concerns and safeguard the rights of community members who have come to think of it as a friend, and a source of good advice.

For more information on *Vgoru*, go to www.vgoru.org

USAID INSIGHT

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

The March 2006 Parliamentary Elections were Ukraine’s first effort at picking a legislative body by a proportional system, and 45 political parties campaigned for seats in the Verkhovna Rada. International election observers judged the elections to be the fairest and most open in Ukraine to date. Ukraine’s mass media played no small role. The vying political parties understood the power in the media in influencing voter perceptions, and the media became the most effective instrument for promoting different political forces and attracting voter sympathy. Politicians were interested in using the media to their fullest advantage, even if it meant at times overstepping the rules of fair play.

In order to intercept abuses, *Internews Ukraine* (IUA), one of *Internews Network*’s partners in the *U-Media* project, along with the NGOs *Equal Access Committee*, *Telekritika*, *Independent Media Trade Union* and the private television company *TV Channel 5* agreed in early March to a joint venture to monitor media activities and develop a public forum to discuss critical media issues during the final period of parliamentary campaigning and the elections.

TV Channel 5, which played a crucial role in presenting consistent and open coverage of the events of the Orange Revolution, lent its support by providing prime-time air time. The station broadcasted daily 10-minute talk segments in which media NGO representatives such as Natalya Ligacheva (*Telekritika*), Dmytro Krykun (IUA), Oleksandr Chekmyshev (*Equal Access Commit-*



Mr. Rizun (right), President of Kyiv National University’s Institute of Journalism, signs the memorandum of cooperation. (Photo: Natalia Fedorova)

tee), and Sergiy Huz’ (*Independent Media Trade Union*) presented media-related campaign and elections issues.

The talk shows addressed such topics as: how campaign debates should be organized on national and local channels; the influence of Russia’s media on the Ukrainian media; adherence to journalistic standards and principles; and more. Ukraine’s leading journalists and media experts appeared as guests in the segments, which received high viewer ratings. The shows also attracted the attention of other journalists and, through public pressure, helped to make the elections of 2006 the most fair and democratic in the history of Ukraine.

INSIDE

TOP STORY

Partnering for Success
page 1

SUCCESS STORIES

Vgoru, En Route to Social Responsibility
page 1

Helping to Make the Transition to an Information Society
page 2

Journalists Master Ecology Reporting
page 3

Media as a Link Between the Government and Citizens
page 3

Vgoru, En Route to Social Responsibility

At the top of the front page of the newspaper *Vgoru* (Upward), one finds the ambitious motto “high journalism.” The phrase speaks for itself, and fully reflects the content of a newspaper that has most everything – from analytical articles and investigative reports, to event coverage, photo profiles and interviews with interesting people, and comments from prominent political and government figures. Just read the head-lines to get a sense of what the paper is ready to address: *Kherson in Mafia Clutches*, *What is Oblast Prosecutor’s Office Hiding?*, *Children are in Fashion Again*. *Vgoru* is considered to be the second most influential paper in the region and one of the few competitive NGO publications in Ukraine. *Vgoru* is run by two NGO publishers – Kherson Oblast Charity and Health Foundation, and *Pivden* (the South) Kherson City Association of Journalists.



A Kherson resident reads a fresh issue of *Vgoru*. (Photo: Maksym Solovyov)

Ten thousand copies of the independent social and political weekly sell briskly at newsstands and from curbside vendors; rolling off the presses every Thursday and sold out by Sunday. This extraordinary demand for the paper has been achieved through objective and balanced coverage, accessibility and a non-partisan political approach. After five years of arduous work, the *Vgoru* team has managed to turn its paper from merely a source of information into a medium that provides advice and consultations, protects human and civic rights, and addresses the problems that are faced by the regional community.

“Back in 1998, when we started *Vgoru*, the media in Kherson Oblast was providing biased coverage, particularly in anything that dealt with advocacy and human rights. The views presented in their articles were too bleak – they did not show any way to

see **VGORU**, page 4

HELPING TO MOVE TO AN INFORMATION SOCIETY

The **Ukraine Reform Education Program (UREP)** is a USAID-funded project implemented by the Center for Ukrainian Reform Education (CURE). UREP's purpose is to promote awareness and participation in economic, social and democratic reforms aimed at assisting Ukraine's transition to a market economy and civil society. Moreover, the program is aimed at raising public awareness about civil rights, and each citizen's ability and responsibility to make a difference in their own lives, local communities and country.

Public Press Centers Help Ukrainians to Better Understand the New Ukrainian Electoral System

The questions were many as Ukraine prepared for yet another round of elections, this time in a seemingly more democratic environment: How do I make sense of such an unwieldy and long voting ballot? Where do I find the platforms of the various political parties, and what do I look for when reading them? How do I protect my choice? What can I do if I see that my rights are violated? Part of the democratic process requires that people know where to find the answers to all of these questions. Having access to a wide variety of information had become even more vital because the March 2006 parliamentary and local elections were considered an important step in Ukraine's further transformation into a European state and a barometer of how much the country had truly changed since the Orange Revolution demonstrations. There was the further challenge of voting in a new proportional election system.



Political party banners on display at the Ternopil Press Club. (Photo: Andriy Kulish)

To create free and equal access to information for all Ukrainians, including all election participants and interested journalists and NGOs, USAID supported 23 regional Independent Public Press Centers, which worked within the format of UREP's regional Press Clubs from May 2005 through April 2006.

Through weekly digests and public meetings, independent observers, experts and ordinary voters could find information on regional and national election campaigns and issues. The Centers assisted voters in getting acquainted with parties' platforms by inviting all political forces to present their ideas before the microphones of the regional Press Centers. Over 700 meetings involving all of Ukraine's major political parties and blocs were organized in the regions, with 120 candidates for city mayors presenting their programs as well. Regional journalists used Public Press Centers as venues for candid conversations between media and election participants, which resulted in more than 6,000 articles, 4,000 TV reports and 3,800 radio programs. In addition, open

debates aired on local TV channels in Cherkasy, Sumy and Uzhhorod indicated an increased willingness of public to participate in the national decision-making processes.

Public Press Centers also helped to answer often-asked questions on new electoral legislation at the local level and gave voters a better sense of how to make their decisions in these races. After visiting several of the centers, representatives of the highly regarded *Committee of Voters of Ukraine* declared that the Independent Public Press Centers successfully managed to bring voters closer to the election process. Representatives of the Central Election Commission also weighed in and positively assessed the important role the Centers played as facilitators in helping voters to better understand new electoral procedures.

Informed Ukrainians Protect Their Families from Avian Flu

When *Avian Flu* (AI) appeared in Ukraine in December 2005, Ukraine came face to face with a virus with global implications along with the agricultural and economic losses that coincide with controlling it. A lack of understanding about how the virus spreads and how to control it has resulted in misunderstandings and mistakes in other countries. In order to give the Ukrainian public much-needed information, USAID sponsored a national public awareness effort. Right after initial AI outbreak in Ukraine, UREP created and launched a nationwide information campaign called *AI: Possible Threats for Ukraine, Real Situation and Preventive Measures*. The campaign aimed to increase public awareness on how to protect agricultural industry, private households and personal health.



AI brochures and posters produced by UREP. (Photo: Hanna Alekseyenko)

Television and radio public service announcements ran daily on *Ukrainian National TV Channel 1*, *Studio 1+1 TV* and *National Radio* to advise people on how to maintain hygiene standards when working with or cooking poultry. Some 28,000 copies of a colorful booklet informing Ukrainians about AI in poultry and humans, the symptoms and

protective measures, titled *Popularly about AI*, were distributed in regional Press Clubs and through U.S. Peace Corps volunteers. UREP also developed informational flyers, which were distributed in the affected areas as soon as the first AI cases in poultry were registered in Crimea.

Regional journalists were a great help in informing Ukrainians about AI. After attending UREP national seminars in November 2005 and April 2006, regional journalists increasingly began informing and educating local communities instead of seeding panic. Seminars in Simferopol, Odesa, Donetsk and Chernihiv in the fall of 2005 significantly increased awareness among regional veterinarians, epidemiologists and agricultural producers on internationally recommended effective protective measures.

Local sanitary epidemiological officials and veterinarians now meet with target audiences on a monthly basis at 24 regional Press Clubs to separate fact from fiction. Currently, an Information Telephone Hotline continues to take phone calls and provide advice. The most immediate concern is to educate rural inhabitants on proper poultry handling and the need to keep domestic poultry locked up during the spring wild birds' migratory period.

Ukraine's Journalists Learn the Law

The legal environment regulating business relations in Ukraine has changed comprehensively over the years, so much so that only professional lawyers can be well versed in the meaning of these dynamic changes. So what about the journalists who report on economic, business, finance and regulatory policy? They have been taught neither jurisprudence, nor to understand the "art" of using the language of law. They typically do not even have a general understanding of the arcane application of legal language, nor the application of the law, to say nothing of specific problem areas such as the legal inconsistencies between the Civil and Commercial Codes.

Drawing on its deep experience with commercial legislation, *The Commercial Law Center* (CLC) has developed a legal education program for journalists, which is being implemented throughout Ukraine for a fifth year now in cooperation with CURE. The program brings together media experts and experienced legal advisers, who in simple and straightforward terms educate journalists on such subjects as intellectual property rights, commercial secrets, how to report on disputes and litigation, and Ukraine's Commercial Code, the 'economic constitution' of Ukraine.

see UREP, page 4

JOURNALISTS MASTER ECOLOGY REPORTING

While April 26 marked 20 years since the Chernobyl catastrophe, the 30-kilometer zone around Chernobyl still contains many mysteries waiting to be uncovered, no less by the media.

Last fall the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) organized a specialized training workshop for regional journalists devoted to environmental coverage of Chernobyl. Fourteen leading journalists from 13 newspapers representing western, eastern and southern Ukraine took part in the training on environmental coverage and travelled to the closed Chernobyl zone. IREX is a key partner in Internews Network's USAID-funded U-Media Project, which helps to strengthen independent media in Ukraine.

IREX/U-Media obtained special access to the 10-kilometer restricted zone, which today still remains uninhabited. The participants, representing many regions of Ukraine, toured villages, towns and cities in the Chernobyl zone that remain unliveable; met with local experts; and visited a museum dedicated to the construction of the reactor's protective shell, commonly referred to as the "sarcophagus."

After the field trip, the group met again to discuss the Orhus Convention - a European Convention on Participation in the Adoption of Environment Issues Resolutions (Orhus, Denmark, 1998) and how to best provide news coverage on ecological

topics. Mary Mycio, director of IREX/U-Media's *Legal Defence and Education Program* (LDEP), who is a journalist and author of



Story on Chernobyl in Kremchuskyi Telegraf

Wormwood Forest: A Natural History of Chernobyl, spoke about her experiences in

developing the book and offered tips for in-depth investigative reporting, especially on ecological issues. During the round table discussion, journalists focused on information access procedures, verification of ecological information, and presentation of ecological information to the readers. As a result of the training, five of the participants managed to have their articles on Chernobyl published in their home newspapers on topics that included the Chernobyl disaster, the local ecology, and the current implication of radiation contamination in the area.

Kateryna Ivanova, journalist from the Zaporizhian newspaper, *Ogo*, was the first to publish. Her articles appeared in two local newspapers and highlighted the fact that the restricted zone is gradually becoming a peculiar sort of local *DisneyLand* - a unique tourist attraction. Visitors are taken on well-organized sightseeing tours along hiking paths during which they are told Chernobyl stories, legends that have developed as the place has taken on aura of mystery.

Other newspaper articles - which appeared in the newspapers *Visnyk*, *the Chernihiv Visnyk*, *Berdyansk Delovoy*, and *Kremenchutskyi Telegraf* - described the daily life of people living in the zone - often illegally; responsibilities of government employees working in the zone; strange sightings, such huge catfish growing in the rivers; and issues that surrounded the final decommissioning of the station back in 2000.

MEDIA AS A LINK BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS

Results of focus groups that the *International Republican Institute* (IRI) conducted last fall determined that many Ukrainians were either unaware or misinformed about reforms that local oblast leaders were implementing, including the work of various governors offices and oblast administrations. In response, IRI began working closely with the press offices of regional governors in 13 oblasts, as well as the city administration of Odesa and the office of Prime Minister for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea as part of IRI's local elected officials training program. The goal was to increase the effectiveness of government press offices in their communications with citizens of their regions about reforms the presidential administration is implementing.

IRI assigned trainers to each of these regions to help improve public relations and communications techniques. Practical exercises regarding how to conduct an effective press conference and message consistency were also part of the training. Additional training was provided on how to organize

constituent questionnaires to gather valuable research data.

A total of 239 press secretaries and media office senior staffers from 16 oblasts attended the trainings, which took place from November 9 through December 20, 2005. Among the trainers for the seminars were such prominent journalists as Andriy Shevchenko, the former vice-president of *Ukrainian Television Channel 1* and newly elected member to the Verkhovna Rada and former *Channel 5* journalist Yevhen Hlibovyskyi.

IRI has continued to work on media development issues from the governance perspective in 2006 and plans to conduct follow-on programs to assess the success of the communication of the new programs currently being implemented at the local level in Ukraine.



Deputy Governor of Zhytomyr Iryna Synavskaya opens a training seminar for press offices of oblast governors